

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T STATE 057190

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MILL, ID, PO

SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE PRISONERS IN TIMOR

REF: A. 75 LISBON 7427; B. STATE 300208; C. JAKARTA 234;

D. JAKARTA 2057; E. LISBON 1149

1. CONSIDERING HOW WE SHOULD RESPOND TO PERSISTENT GOP
APPEALS FOR US INTERVENTION WITH INDONESIANS IN BEHALF
OF THE 23 DETAINED PORTUGUESE MILITARY PERSONNEL, DEPART-
MENT HAS COME TO CONCLUSION THAT -- QUITE APART FROM
OTHER FACTORS INVOLVED -- PRISONER ISSUE IS NEEDLESSLY
EXACERBATING GOI-GOP DISPUTE AND COULD WELL IMPEDE

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PROGRESS TOWARD SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF TIMOR PROBLEM.

WE CAN SEE NO LIKELIHOOD THAT INDONESIANS WILL BE ABLE TO GAIN ANY NEGOTIATING ADVANTAGE OVER GOP BY CONTINUING TO HOLD PRISONERS. TO THE CONTRARY, PRIMARY RESULT OF THEIR CONTINUED DETENTION IS TO KEEP PORTUGUESE ATTENTION FOCUSED ON TIMOR WHEN IT OTHERWISE MIGHT LAG. OUR CONCLUSION IS THAT GOI AND PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT IN DILI NOW HAVE MUCH MORE TO GAIN THAN TO LOSE BY PROMPT RELEASE OF THE DETAINEES. WE DO NOT WANT TO BECOME DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THIS ISSUE NOR TO ASSUME POSITION OF GO-BETWEEN, BUT WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST INFORMALLY TO ACQUAINT INDONESIANS WITH OUR THINKING.

2. FOR JAKARTA: REQUEST YOU SEEK EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE PRISONER QUESTION INFORMALLY WITH GOI. LEAVE TO YOU QUESTION OF HOW BEST TO APPROACH INDONESIANS, BUT APPEARS FROM HERE THAT INFORMAL DISCUSSION OF ISSUE WITH SUDHARMONO OR SOMEONE IN EQUIVALENT POSITION WHO HAS PRESIDENT SUHARTO'S EAR WOULD BE MOST APPROPRIATE. YOU SHOULD STRESS THAT WE ARE NOT MAKING OFFICIAL MATTER OF THIS QUESTION BUT MERELY GIVING OUR APPRAISAL OF SITUATION AS GOOD FRIEND OF BOTH PARTIES. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT INTENSITY OF PORTUGUESE INTEREST IN TIMOR IS SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCED BY CONTINUED DETENTION OF THEIR SOLDIERS. IF THESE SOLDIERS WERE RELEASED, WE HOPE THAT PORTUGUESE WILLINGNESS TO ACQUIESCE IN RESOLUTION OF TIMOR SITUATION SATISFACTORY TO INDONESIA WOULD BE ENHANCED AND THAT LONG-TERM PORTUGUESE INTEREST IN THE TERRITORY WOULD DWINDLE. PROMPT AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE, IN OUR VIEW, WOULD BE HIGHLY ADVANTAGEOUS TO GOI AND PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY IF IT COULD BE ANNOUNCED IN TANDEM WITH SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT TO SECURITY COUNCIL ON TIMOR.

3. FOR LISBON: WHEN JAKARTA REPORTS APPROACH, YOU MAY INFORM APPROPRIATE GOP OFFICIALS THAT US HAS RAISED PRISONER ISSUE ONCE AGAIN IN JAKARTA. UNLESS JAKARTA HAS OBJECTION, YOU MAY CONVEY TO PORTUGUESE SUBSTANCE OF GOI RESPONSE. KISSINGER

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